

Academic Freedom Policy

This document is the parent policy for any College or Divisional procedures. Questions regarding this policy are to be directed to the identified Policy Administrator.

Functional Category:	Academic
Approval Date:	April 18 2018
Effective Date:	April 18, 2018
Policy Owner:	Vice President, Teaching and Learning
Policy Administrator:	Dean, Academic Research and Development

Objective:

Academic Freedom is essential to the advancement of knowledge, learning, critical thought, open discussion, and college's role in serving the good of society. As such, it is an important precept of NorQuest College (college). In serving our community in our role as a comprehensive community institution, the college recognizes that fostering independent thinking, personal expression, and intellectual risk-taking is vital for all faculty, staff, and students.

Authority to establish this policy is derived from the [NorQuest College Board of Governor's Policy No. 5](#), which delegates authority to the President and CEO to establish policies and procedures for the college's management and operation.

Policy:

The Right to Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is the right to pursue truth and advance knowledge within an environment that supports independent thought and expression, including those that may be controversial or unpopular. As academic freedom is central to teaching, learning, research, and other scholarly activities at the college, all faculty, staff, and students have the right to full academic freedom and expression without fear of reprisal.

The college's Board of Governors and administration will not limit the legitimate exercise of academic freedom. Moreover, the legitimate exercising of academic freedom by faculty, staff, and students, as per this policy, will not be, in itself, grounds for discipline or institutional censure.

Academic Freedom Entitlements

Faculty

So long as they adequately perform their work-related duties, academic freedom includes the freedom for faculty to:

- Teach approved and assigned classes. This includes the right to select course materials, determine student assessment criteria, and teaching methodologies as per the program's and college's established curriculum, assessments, processes, and practices so long as the learning outcomes of assigned courses, program requirements, government requirements, and accreditation requirements are met;
- Respectfully teach and discuss in class any aspect of a topic that is pertinent to the understanding of the subject matter in the course which they are teaching, so long as the learning outcomes of the course are achieved;
- Use any pedagogical approach they deem appropriate, so long as the learning outcomes of the course, the program outcomes, the College-wide Learning Outcome, governmental requirements, and accreditation requirements are achieved;
- Participate in curriculum design and course development, as per the college's process and practices related to curriculum development;

- Conduct research and other scholarly inquiry, including presenting and publishing the results of their research and scholarly work according to normal academic standards of their discipline;
- Engage in the pursuit of knowledge and social advancement through professional practice, public performance, creative works, and community service;
- Participate in institutional governance; and
- Act and speak in their capacity as professionals and citizens.

Staff

So long as they adequately perform their work-related duties, academic freedom includes the freedom for staff to:

- Complete their work assignments as they deem fit as per their department's established practices and the college's processes, so long as the assignment, departmental, and college outcomes, and government and accreditation requirements, are met;
- Conduct research and other scholarly inquiry, including presenting and publishing the results of their research and scholarly work subject to normal academic standards of their disciplines;
- Engage in the pursuit of knowledge and social advancement through professional practice, public performance, creative works, and community service;
- Participate in institutional governance; and
- Act and speak in their capacity as professionals and citizens.

Students

Students have the freedom to:

- Courteously raise for discussion in a class any aspect of a topic which is pertinent to the understanding of the subject matter being addressed in that class;
- Participate in institutional governance as facilitated through the Students' Association and other areas;
- Participate in other opportunities for institutional discussion and input; and
- Act and speak in their capacity citizens.

Limitations to Academic Freedom

While academic freedom is central to the college and to academia at large, it does not imply rights greater than those granted by the laws of Canada to all Canadian residents. No freedom is absolute and no right is unlimited, and therefore those who claim the right to academic freedom also accept the responsibility of being open-minded, respectful, and honest. Actions or speeches that obstruct discussion and/or freedom of inquiry, fail to respect the rights of others, or fail to follow the laws of Canada will be considered a breach of this policy.

The right to academic freedom also does not negate any obligations, entitlements, or responsibilities individuals may have as members of professional associations, through licensure, or under the college's Code of Conduct. Failure to meet one's professional or licencing obligations within the context of one's academic or non-academic role will be considered academic misconduct.

When individuals exercise the right to academic freedom, they must do so with awareness of the fact that other members of the college community enjoy the same rights and freedoms including the right to publicly and respectfully disagree with the stated position.

The Balance of Academic Freedom and Academic Responsibility

Faculty, staff, and students' right to academic freedom is balanced by a corresponding obligation to academic responsibility. Academic responsibility involves adherence to college and program policies, procedures, processes, and the accepted standards of one's profession and/or discipline. It also involves recognizing NorQuest College's right and obligation to manage its affairs according to its mission and mandate.

Academic responsibility does not preclude disagreement with, or criticisms of, policies, procedures, or processes. Rather, the college respects and promotes open and respectful debate about its governance and practices. It further recognizes that, when debate occurs in a respectful and reasonable manner, the institution is strengthened.

Academic Freedom & Representing the College

The right to academic freedom further requires that faculty, staff, and students distinguish between when they are acting and speaking on behalf of NorQuest College and when they are acting and speaking in a professional capacity or a personal capacity as a responsible citizen.

Individuals have the right to state their personal opinions. When speaking, faculty, staff, and students must not indicate they are speaking on behalf of the college unless given prior authorization to do so as per the *External College Communications Procedure*. Furthermore, an indication of affiliation with the college should not be interpreted as speaking on behalf of the college or any of the college communities.

When speaking on behalf of the college, faculty, staff, and students are expected to adhere to the *College Communications Policy*, the *External College Communications Procedure* for external communications, and the *Internal College Communications Procedure* for any internal communications. They will also comply with the college's various *Codes of Conduct*, the *Student Judicial Affairs Policy*, and the Students' Association *Code of Conduct* and bylaws. Failure to follow these policies, procedures, Codes of Conduct, and bylaws when speaking or acting on behalf of the college will be considered a breach of the current policy.

Support for Academic Freedom

The college recognizes that for academic freedom to be practiced, it must be supported. NorQuest College, the NorQuest Faculty Association, and the NorQuest Students' Association will support whenever possible the expression of academic freedom in a safe and respectful way. This may include, but is not limited to, creating safe spaces for groups and events, engaging speakers, encouraging civic engagement, and facilitating discussions.

Breaches of this Policy

Breaches of this policy, including the act of limiting the academic freedom of others, will be subject to the college's established policies and procedures for misconduct for students, staff, and faculty. Breaches will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Violations of the law will be reported to the appropriate college and law enforcement authorities and may result in dismissal.

Definitions:

Academic Freedom: Is the freedom to pursue truth and advance knowledge without the fear of reprisal or the influence of religious, political, or institutional proscription. Academic freedom includes the right to pursue independent thought and expression regarding one's teaching or learning,

in one's research or other scholarly activities, and in one's professional service and civic engagement without fear of censorship or reprisal.

Related Information:
Related Procedures:
Next Review Date:
Revision History:

- [Applied Research and the Promotion of Innovation Policy](#)
- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)
- [Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- [College Communications Policy](#)
- [Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Participants Policy](#)
- [Integrity in Research and Scholarship Policy](#)
- [Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment Policy](#)
- [Student Judicial Affairs Policy](#)

- [Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)
- [Applied Research and the Promotion of Innovation Procedure](#)
- [Code of Conduct & Respectful Workplace & Learning Environment Complaints and Investigation Procedure](#)
- [External College Communication Procedure](#)
- [Integrity in Research and Scholarship Procedure](#)
- [Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)
- [Student Complaints Procedure](#)

December 2022

January 2013: New
 August 2013: Update for document links and branding
 December 2013: update for links
 November 2014: update for change in policy administrator
 April 2018: revised and updated